

Baltimore Sun Questionnaire

1. Please describe your educational and professional background and how it has prepared you to serve on the City Council.

I am a high school teacher and undergraduate instructor by profession. Earned my Master's Degree. English Literature, University of Pennsylvania (1966) and my Bachelor's Degree, English Literature, Immaculata College (1963). Earned credits for Ph.D., Program in Writing, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania (1985-87).

Served as a member of the Baltimore City Council, former 2nd District (1975-83); as President of City Council (1987-95); and, as a member of City Council, 14th District, since change to single-member districts (2004-present).

Served as adjunct faculty in English and/or urban policy at Johns Hopkins University, UMBC, and Maryland Institute, College of Art (1984-87, 1996-2004).

Served as administrator, Division of Geriatric Medicine, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and director of Robert Wood Johnson "Hospital Initiatives in Long Term Care," a multi-year pilot program awarded to our Geriatric Division (1984-87).

President and unpaid director of Greater Homewood Community Corporation (early 1970's), in course of which we participated in the first City Fair, opened the City's first Mayor's Station, received the services of the City's first District Planner, and successfully lobbied United Way to establish Project Urban Self Help (PUSH) to fund indigenous community-based non-profit organizations.

Our 4 children all attended the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS). Along with my career in teaching, my role as a mother --- and now a grandmother --- of BCPS students has set the stage for my City Council involvement as an education advocate.

The Greater Homewood experience taught me early-on the need for support systems to help our senior citizens function independently. In response, Greater Homewood established Action In Maturity (AIM), still the City's only non-profit transportation program dedicated to senior citizen patrons. AIM and my Geriatric Division experience have ever since influenced a legislative focus on the well being of Baltimore City's elders.

Finally, my 23 years in the City Council have provided me with a broad perspective on the opportunities and challenges of economic and social change and with an unshakeable confidence in Baltimore City's resilience.

2. Why do you want to serve on the council? What would your top priorities be if you are elected?

I love Baltimore City and want to be part of its evolution. I cherish the diversity and creativity and just plain stamina of the citizens I represent. My greatest satisfaction is helping people move their own good ideas and causes onto the stage of public participation and benefit.

My top priority if re-elected is to enrich the lives and opportunities of our young people by helping our City ensure them of a quality public education, the financial support to attend college, job opportunities and experience year-round, safe and engaging recreation centers (like the one being built in the 14th District's Clifton Park), and safe neighborhoods to grow up in and return to as part of Baltimore's future. My other priorities are:

- to promote public safety for our neighborhoods.
- to expand our volunteer Court Watch program so as to deter revolving-door aggression from among the most violent and chronic of our offenders and, through that oversight, to provide communities with the sense that, "There is something we can do."
- to help my constituents get jobs, especially adult men whose very roles and identities are diminished by lack of gainful employment.
- to promote a support system which extends independent living for our City's retirees.

3. Do you support Baltimore's current crime-fighting strategy? What changes, if any, would you advocate for to improve public safety in the city?

I do support the leadership and direction of our current crime-fighting strategy. In addition, I most urgently advocate for the dedication of a significant number of police officers to walking beats in troubled neighborhoods. This is the "strategy" we need to restore the mutual trust and respect required for effective policing, criminal apprehension and grassroots public safety.

To improve public safety in the City, I also advocate a sustained private/public funding priority for the employment, recreation and academic opportunities to divert our youth from those default peer associations which too often can lead from aimlessness to criminality.

4. Do you support the recent reforms in the Baltimore City school system? Do you believe any changes are needed in the schools' governance structure (such as direct mayoral control or an elected school board)?

I do support the recent reforms in the Baltimore City school system and the integrity of a system which strives for accountability in the interest of academic achievement. We have added so many new charter and transformation schools, however, that we need now to stabilize our academic inventory so as to evaluate its hitherto "moving parts."

In adding so many competing "choice" options, we must take care to support and maintain the City's traditional schools of excellence, such as Poly, City, Western, School for the Arts. These are the "known quantities" and acknowledged centers of excellence to which our students have traditionally aspired and on which our families have relied in educating their children. They should thrive, at the least, as the first among equals.

I support Councilman Bill Henry's idea of City Council approval of School Board nominees. This change would provide a public hearing process to encourage accountability while preserving the governor's and mayor's current joint appointment powers.

5. How would you address the city's backlog in school maintenance and renovations, estimated to be as much as \$2 billion?

The \$2.8 billion "backlog" in school repairs, renovations and new construction far exceeds the capacity of annual capital funding for our schools. Backlog funding requires "new money," including a lion's share of the estimated \$15 million in annual slots revenues --- as well as an additional new and dedicated revenue source in effect until we achieve these specific goals.

The leadership of the City, including City Council, must identify a new source of capital revenue in addition to slots and win voter approval to dedicate its revenues solely to this

backlog effort.

The schools referendum on this November 's ballot does not include the dedication of funding to ensure that any identified new revenue source will be reserved for this effort. For any chance of support for any new revenue source, City voters must trust and vote that such revenues will be used to fix our schools and not dissipated as in our Maryland Lottery experience.

6. Property taxes have become a major issue in this year's election. Do you believe the city's tax rate needs to be cut? If so, by how much, and what steps would you take to keep the city's budget in balance while lowering the rate?

Yes. We need a lower tax rate, but we first need to bring our City whole through this recession. We can legislate a program now, to begin later, as triggered and sustained by objective indicators of recession recovery and economic growth.

Meanwhile, once recovery kicks in, we owe it to the citizens to roll back many of the regressive "fees" adopted a year ago to fill the \$121 million shortfall in the fiscal year 2011 budget.

To compensate and make room for legislated tax reductions, I support a "penalty" tax rate for abandoned properties, to provide disincentives for "sitting" on such properties until the market improves; and, a "service charge" for public safety services for the City's income-generating non-taxable properties.

In this mix, I support retaining the 4% Homestead cap for the City's owner-occupants, and I urge the State to permit Homestead "portability" to promote homeowner-to-homeowner sales.

7. The city has faced large budget shortfalls in recent years. If that trend continues, what top priorities would you protect from cuts? In what areas would you pursue spending reductions?

Three top priorities for protection:

- "maintenance of effort" for the Baltimore City Public Schools;
- youth programs, including summer jobs, School Age Child Care Centers, community schools, after school and summer school programs, public pools, recreation centers;
- elimination of all rotating fire company closures.

I would pursue spending reductions in legal/claim expenses in Baltimore Police Department; and, in the consultant and legal expenses of the City in general.

8. Baltimore has lost tens of thousands of jobs in the last decade. What would you do to encourage economic development and provide employment opportunities for city residents?

A trained, educated and job-ready workforce is essential for generating and attracting jobs. Achieving that workforce requires relevant public education, job experience for students, and major tuition support for students pursuing post-secondary training and education. We also require strategies to attract a greater share of local college and university graduates to stay and pursue careers here in Baltimore. Safe streets, affordable housing, efficient public transportation ---- and job opportunities, of course --- must be part of that self-fulfilling strategy.

A word about the jobs we already have.

Our City's wellbeing requires Living Wage standards throughout the private sector so that the retail and hospitality jobs which we so vigorously seek and in which so many of our current residents are employed lift our City's economy above the "working poor" status of so many of our families and neighborhoods.